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# Dialogue

Dr. Elizabeth C. Wright
Dr. John C. Otts
Dr. Russell P. Norman
Mr. James H. Lovell
Mr. Stuart D. Currie
Dr. Dougald McD. Monroe, moderator

This dialogue has been transcribed from a panel discussion on the question, "What then must I do?" which was the topic of Christian Re-Emphasis Week, February, 1962.

DR. WRIGHT:

We recognize an inner feeling or inner conviction of helplessness that many of us do have from time to time—a sense, which may be dismaying or even paralyzing, that one can't be significant in one's present situation. We find ourselves asking what are the elements in the present situation that provoke this inner feeling of helplessness in so many of us? Is our situation materially different from the situation of previous generations? We find our question becoming historical; and, we try to see whether we're dealing with a problem that is new or a problem that has now come to be exposed in a distinctive way, but is actually testified to by those who have gone before us. We certainly, very quickly, find ourselves confronting the ethical question: How do we cope with this situation? Is there possible action; is there an appropriate action in it? All these questions, it seems to me, thrust upon us the theological question. I say that not just because it is my racket, and not just because we are in an occasion that is referred to as "Nod to God Week," but because, by this very attempt to probe, we find that the questions take on theological dimensions. What we are talking about really concerns the nature of man. Does it help us any if we try to approach it as Christians; if we try to relate it to the Christian analysis of man's conditions? Does the notion of man as a created and finite being, as not divine, as being limited, throw some light on it? Consider a concept of the Christian teaching about sin, or the Christian teaching on humility. Do these help us to understand what we are dealing with, perhaps—why we react to it the way we do, and what the possibilities are? Are we carried along any further if we look at Jesus Christ, and try to see how our feeling of helplessness looks in the light of what He was and is?

DR. NORMAN:

Is it really so different now than it has ever been? Of course, there are many who say it is. The words you usually hear are about the complexities of the modern world. But is it any more complex to us than it was to someone living one hundred years ago? Are the feelings of helplessness more justified now than they

have ever been? Helplessness is a subjective state, no matter whether it is justified or not. For example, a feeling of unjustified helplessness resulted from Orsen Wells' radio broadcast, "The War of the Worlds," a documentary sort of blow by blow commentary on an invasion from Mars. People fled to the hills by the thousands. Some sold their property and grabbed their children when there was really nothing to be helpless about. The whole thing was a hoax. This is extreme, but I think it is something we are going to have to deal with. Today, of course, there is a bomb that may blow us all up. Yesterday the bomb was not quite so big. The people in ancient Egypt felt that a weapon as horrible as the arrow might, in fact, someday foretell the doom of all mankind. These things are quite relative, I think. We must consider the problem, and fight against the overwhelming push that there seems to be for us constantly to interpret our situation as being worse than we ever thought before. I don't think that this is necessarily so.
MR. LOVELL:

I should like to distinguish between a feeling of helplessness and the fact of helplessness. We may feel that we are helpless, when, in fact, we are not. Between these two is the problem of knowledge—what we can know about the fact of our helplessness. We find that we cannot know a great deal about how helpless we are. The more we find out about certain things, and the more power we achieve; the more certain our limits of knowledge become.

Adam, having eaten of the tree of knowledge, finds that he knows less and less instead of more and more. He finds himself condemned to live by the wrinkling of his brow as much as by the sweat of his brow. The fact of helplessness has two real aspects, and we sometimes confuse these in talking about it. One aspect to be considered is help that comes to us from the outside; we cannot be said to be truly helpless if there is a help coming to us from outside our own power. We can also consider helplessness and the aspect of efficiency of our own actions, whether they have consequences or not. It seems to me that without an affirmative answer to both of these we cannot rid ourselves of the feeling of helplessness, and we cannot derive an affirmative answer from these. In fact, we may not be able to make an affirmative answer with positive knowledge to either one. To begin with, we can't be sure if our acts have consequences, because we can't test—we can't try it both ways. We cannot be sure in any situation that God, or any power outside of us, is active, since we have become expert at tying cause and effect together and eliminating extraneous forces. It is also possible that these forces in our lives, our own actions and the actions outside of us, may be in a conflict, which would render us helpless. In any case, we can never be sure by the nature of the situation that an act has consequences; that it is effective; that any help is coming to us from outside our own strength. The first time I heard this question, it was phrased: "Is the feeling of helplessness justified?" It is not only justifiable, it has been justified and justified and justified. Whether we accept this justification or not, we have to live with the fact that any number of people have justified it to themselves and have acted on this justification. It is very difficult to know what we mean when we say, "Is it justified?" Perhaps it would be better to say, "Is it inevitable?" I am afraid that I must say that it is justifiable because of the limits of our knowledge. We can never be sure, we can never convince ourselves as to whether this help comes from outside or whether our own actions take effect. Things we are most certain of—death and taxes—really increase rather than decrease our feeling of helplessness. The more certain of our own helplessness we become. It seems to me that the feeling is not itself so important as the actions based on that feeling. I don't think the feeling is unique. If we look at the early Middle Ages, a time when answers seemed as certain as they ever became in Christian development, we find in literature—particularly that of Chaucer—constant complaint of the

feeling of helplessness before the forces of fate. This is a constant theme of man—the inevitable, the unavoidable. The feeling of helplessness can be used to justify an action. Many people have done it. We have this feeling; we must learn to live with it, and act in spite of it. I think it was Goethe who said, "We must learn to act without hope and without knowledge." We must learn to act helplessly. We can only afford to base our actions on this feeling if we are content to will the worst evil we can conceive. If knowing evil exists, we assume our helplessness, and refuse to act, we have willed it; we have, in fact, acted. This act seems to me to have consequences we can't afford.

Dr. Otts:

Is there any point in wringing our hands, in saying there is no hope for the world, or for our nation, or for ourselves? What is to be accomplished by that? I say practically nothing. What can we do? Let's quit feeling sorry for ourselves. It is incumbent upon each one of us, as we look at our own futures, the future of our nation, the future of the world, to be as informed as possible. There is no sense in anyone's failing to read, failing to think, failing to converse about what the possibilities are. We need to hold on to some basic beliefs. It may be that there is some goodness in the world. We must not assume that there isn't! It may be that God is still in His heaven; we cannot assume that He isn't! Perhaps we *can* assume that all is not right with the world. But, we can look at it, and learn about it, and most of all, we must be receptive to any tone of optimism.

Mr. Currie:

I remember in Lee county, Texas, during the depression, old Judge Webb woke up one morning and everything had closed down tighter than a jug. People were out of work all over the county. Judge Webb found that he had twenty-five cents left in this world. What in the world was he going to do? He went down to Woolworth's and bought a set of dominoes. He and some of his friends started playing dominoes. That county in central Texas played dominoes through the depression. They had the lowest suicide rate in the whole state. Sometimes you get to the point where the only alternative seems to be to just blow the whistle, and say let's stop and play dominoes. Things can't get any worse—may get better, but there's nothing I can do about it, except try to keep my sanity. On the other hand, Camus, in *The Rebel,* says that one of the curious aspects of human history is the occasion on which someone has stood up and said, "No!" There was a slave who for fifteen years had very patiently and obediently emptied all the slop jars in the mansion every morning at daybreak. One day he said, "No!" The master was amazed; he couldn't understand it. This was not revolt; it was not a revolution. The slave hadn't suddenly conceived a scheme for overturning the economic order, or for reversing his position. All he had done was to say no. Camus makes the distinction between rebellion and revolution. The rebel is always one who protests in a kind of inchoate sense. He does not have a complete plan to put into effect, but he protests. He is saying no; he is saying that something is preferable to this. He doesn't know what it is, but he's not going to lie down and let the train roll over him any longer. "No!" This may be our duty. When I grew up, this was a young hot-dog nation. "Everybody get out of our way: we are going to act. You all better be prepared, but prepared or not, here we come!" One of the things that baffles us today is that this is no longer true. We can't choose and pick our way and expect people to move aside . . . . There may be possibilities of totalitarian control that are so far different from anything of the past that one is justified in saying that our situation is more desperate than the situation of previous generations.

Dr. Monroe:

One of the problems is that the bad people and good people will not identify themselves so that we can know who we must say no to.

Mr. Currie:

It may take some doing to know where to say no. It may require more than one is pre-

pared to commit, to say one's no in public or in places of power. But what is inexcusable is not saying no to the easiest person to whom it is easy to say no. Let's look at the race tensions in the South. One can observe, over the past few years, an increasing readiness of persons to express opinions they would not have expressed anywhere several years ago. They may be opinions that were held that long ago, or they may have come only recently. One is most likely to say no in intimate and small groups. Many individuals in many bridge clubs, locker rooms, and Pullman trains, had to have said no where they wouldn't have said it yesterday, for this change to have taken place. I don't deny the possibility of a committee's executing a masterpiece in pictorial representation, or a drama, or a symphony. But usually this is the work of individuals. I think one ought never underestimate the crucial significance of individuals' decisions.

Dr. Otts:

We must realize that that is not a reality here yet. The less concerned we are, the more vocal we are, while letting someone else solve our problems. We need to rise up and say, "No!"

A Student:

Just when do we rise up and how?

Dr. Otts:

I think we are really saying it to ourselves. We can say that everything will work out all right, but it isn't going to be that simple.

# Echoes of Christian Re-emphasis Week

Elizabeth Chandler Cumming

I do not feel helpless. Several times during our week of discussion, and many times before it, I have wondered whether this is a blindness or a näiveté of which I ought to be ashamed. I do not wish to be blind or naive. I read Sartre, Camus and the morning paper. I believe and try to understand the scientists. I have had many hopes frustrated, including the hope to see the world at peace; and "the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears" has cut deeply into my personal life. Nevertheless, I do not feel helpless. And I do not feel ashamed.

Perhaps this shamelessness is partly to be accounted for by the company I keep. By profession I am a good deal in the company of others who do not feel helpless. "Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety," cries Hotspur, and dies, albeit unwisely, befriended by sheer courage. Bacon, convinced that "adversity doth best discover virtue," is not upset by troublous times. To the first World War goes Rupert Brooke, a young man who, in spite of loving life, has found it morally confusing and frightening. When he goes into danger for a cause, he turns "as swimmers into cleanness leaping." He feels

> "Safe though all safety's lost; safe where men fall;
> And if these poor limbs die, safest of all."

The company I keep has often disclosed to me ways to live the safe, or saved, life under threat. I am helped by their techniques. "Ration your worry," I heard a wise woman say to harassed people in wartime, "—give yourselves time to envisage clearly all the worst things that can happen. Get as far as you can in planning how to meet them. Then use your will to turn away from anxiety. Now feed your spirits, that they may grow strong to endure. Food is always to be had: the clear beauty of the morning sky, the genuineness of children, the goodness of a practiced skill, the strength of a friend, the spiritual release of great art, the high words and deeds of a hero. 'Feed, and grow strong.'" Many of my companions assure me that a useful person is not helpless. Service need not be neurotic do-goodism, but, humbly offered from a life rooted in joy, any usefulness to others is authentically valuable, and a means of help and safety for oneself; and this I find from experience to be true. Safety does not reside in length of time for living; it lives, and always has, in worth of life.

Does it, then, depend upon place? Must I be helpless because I cannot be sure that I shall always have this world, or my own skin, to live in? I like my skin, or I am used to it, and the world is infinitely beautiful, and hard to yield. Like Emerson, I rise early, and "the

dawn is my Paphos and mine Assyria." "Inebriate of air am I," with Emily Dickinson as my drinking companion. An old English farmer in a field watched a flight of German bombers go over. "Maybe they'll interfere with we," he said, "but the life'll go on. Tisn't in nature it could stop." But if it should? Though I love this world, I do not think it holds all loving, or all life. It holds great areas of blackness and confusion. Yet the beauty and intricate order in nature and the life of man are clues for hope; clues to a Power beyond time and place. So Whitman:

> No array of terms can say how much I am
> at peace about God and about death;
> Why should I wish to see God better than
> this day?
> I see something of God each hour of the
> twenty-four, and each moment then,
> In the faces of men and women I see
> God, and in my own face in the glass,
> I find letters from God dropt in the street,
> and every one is signed by God's name.

I have an old friend named Jonathan Edwards, who found himself in a place unknown to Whitman, a worse place than any I think I shall ever be in, shaken over the pit of Hell like a spider over the fire; and yet he was not helpless, nor afraid even of loss of identity, because he knew the hand that held him was the hand of God. I listen with both ears; into one come the thundering threats of man's total destruction of his planet; into the other, curious whispers of his possible discovery of other forms of life on distant planets. "Whence cometh our help?" The possibilities are bounded only by God's power. A comrade of mine has shown me that, as the deluge sweeps over the world, salvation is in the grain for new food, stored and safe in Noah's dry ark.

Whitman, and I, have seafaring blood in our veins.

> O my brave soul!
> O farther farther, sail!
> A daring joy, but safe! are they not all
> the seas of God?
> O farther, farther, farther sail!

Thoreau and I do not feel helpless. Nor are we ashamed. We know "the sun is but a morning star."

# Why Are You Frightened?

Why are you frightened? Not a cricket stands
With drooping feelers and with goblin eyes,
Elusive of our feet and of our hands,
Keeping its spring direction a surprise.

Why are you frightened? Not one furry flake
Has fallen from the driftwood that you chose
Last summer, on the beaches, for the sake
Of color, deep Egyptian blue, and rose

That blossoms now, behind the andirons winking
With polished peace, against a day hard spent.
Why do you hesitate on carpet, sinking
As if the floor were clouds, the chintzes rent,

The windows broken, and the floods descending
As once for Noah, and the Ark denied?
As if in you, indeed, all homes were ending,
And yours were the last voice he heard that cried?

For, if it is, what matter? Let the waters
Close over you, to lightning and to thunder!
But bless creation; bless the sons and daughters
Borne by that freight of life!—Yes, falling under

The realm of air, the realm of all you love,
The place of all you tried to do and know,
Dream how those doors will open, where above
One handful of the grain they brought will grow.

—ROBERTA CHALMERS

# Eighteen-Ninety

Eighteen-ninety was a hard year,
So old Grandma Moses said.
Two of her children caught smallpox;
There was scarcely enough meal for bread.

The full crops ready for harvest
Had been bitten by blight and by frost.
One of the best Jersey milk cows
Took fever, and ailed, and was lost.

But when she was asked about those times,
Grandma Moses remembered best
That the year of eighteen-ninety
Passed over like all the rest.

—SUZANNE SWAIN

# NO TIME FOR GRIEVIN'

Angela Williams

A stiff white cap sat on top of her head, accentuating the whites of her eyes. Around its edge ran a strip of black rickrack, which brought out the darkness and warmth of the fused iris and pupil. She stood, big and fat, as every colored Mammy should be. Her immense arms had clamped about me too many times to count. Each time I plunged wet-eyed into her skirt, I scented starch in the clean uniform that bent almost completely around me.

One day, some fifteen years ago, I half smothered myself in Eva's lap, while she patted me on the head a little too hard. Picking me up and pressing me to her sponge-like bosom, she whispered sternly, "Hush, baby! Dyin' ain't no cause fo' weepin'!" I had just watched Petty, a beagle only several months old, suddenly stop snapping at my socks, begin to shiver slightly, then shake violently, finally flopping on the grass. He lay motionless. I poked at him teasingly. "He's playing possum," I thought. I stared for a long time. Nothing happened. My stomach felt funny. From under the naked hickory I made a beeline to the porch where Eva stood, sweeping in time to the hymn she sang.

No more running and hiding in the slender oats; no one to gnaw playfully on my fingers; no silky coat to pet and hold close after the last chase around the house; no more tries to knot the drooping ears! My playmate was no more; my shadow had vanished in just a second. Maybe I could have taken it better if I hadn't learned that he died because of *me*. You see, I hate prunes. That particular morning when Eva left the kitchen, I had sneaked outside and scraped my bowlful into Petty's plate. He loved them! Ate 'em whole! And the seeds had stopped up his insides.

Eva and I dug a shallow hole on the edge of the woods, put in the lifeless black and auburn hound, and kicked the ash-colored dirt back in place. I was as sad as one can be at age five. But Eva seemed almost happy! She raised her chin, lifted her arms, and turned moist eyes toward the treetops. In a deep, rumbling tone she sang, "Swing low, sweet cha-ri-ot. . ." After that she sat me down on her knee, and rambled on and on about "gloryland" and "meetin' Jesus." I guess I didn't understand it all, but I absorbed everything—the thick

breath on my face that made me blink, her swimming eyes, and the spasmodic squeezes. They comforted me much more than "Sweetie, don't cry! We'll get you another one," from Daddy.

Days dragged. We walked to the hump of ground often—talked and sang to Petty. Eva said nobody really dies; that they just get tired of this bad world, and go up to the happy world where God and the angels live. To stay up there I figured everybody had to have wings; so, to this day, when I think of Petty, I see him standing on his hind legs, white tummy showing, and wings tied to his outstretched paws. He looked silly with a halo, so I pretended he lost it. Petty was alive! After all, Eva said anybody you love can never die anyway, " 'cause you carry around a piece of 'em with you."

A few years passed. Eva's aged father, Daddy Bill, died. Since the death of her husband and mother, Eva had lived with Daddy Bill on a plot of ground just large enough for a three-room hut and a backyard pump. They planted a couple of rows of corn and tomatoes each year, and raised a dozen or so chickens. Every day Daddy Bill rode to town in his dilapidated wagon, speaking to everyone along the way. The old grey mule responded not at all to the gentle slapping of the worn leather reins on his bony back. Anyway, the slow pace gave Daddy Bill time to say a couple of sentences to everybody. I remembered how, when he first tipped his cap to me and revealed a mat of white kink, it had puzzled me. I had thought black people only grew black hair.

Sitting squinched up beside Eva at the funeral, I felt out of place—sort of cloroxed—among all these dark people. A faint Amen or two seconded the preacher's praises of Daddy Bill, and the joy he was to find in his new home. No mumbled prayers, no noisy silence, no moans and groans. After a while our family quietly left. When the door snapped shut, a rhythm began to build up. Amens grew louder. Alleluias rang out! Through the window I watched men and women rise, one by one, clapping their hands, and singing to the top of their voices. Clear tears caught the morning sun shining through the panes, and the dark cheeks seemed streaked with gold and silver.

I knew about death, now. It was the curve on Eva's full, ribbed lips, a far-away look, a lively spiritual, a winged pup yipping from up there somewhere; it was clappin' and shoutin'—and cryin'. Yes, tears! But tears of joy, not sorrow, 'cause "dyin' ain't no time fo' grievin'!"

# The Dogs

The dogs in the neighborhood are barking—
Why?
A boy is passing by dragging a stick along
  on the ground;
The sound is harsh and gritty.
You know—you've done the same more times than one,
Scarcely knowing.

He feels the hard dirt beneath his toes,
Then suddenly, in fun, the stick is teasing the dogs
  that have come, edging closer.
Near-daring challenges are untuned and untimed—
Here is the thing that is bothering them,
Setting their nerves to twitching.
And so, they group behind him, and bay.

—BETSY JOHNSON

# UNEXPENDABLE

Marian Rogers

Living with a husband is a way of life *sine qua non.* I recommend it highly to all women—well, at least to all married ones. Aside from obvious advantages, like a roof over your head, dinners that can be thawed, and his getting the car to start (even if you do have to swallow the impulse to shout "I did *not* flood it!"), there are certain little compensations that give married life the homey, "hearthy" touches that poets write about (the unmarried ones); that spinsters dream about—and that wives tear their hair about. Not all women, of course, are finishing college about twenty years too late, as I am; and not all homey touches are the same—but they are there, and are simply variations on a theme universally familiar to all wives.

One night last week—to show you what I mean—I was almost within reach of balancing an oxidation-reduction equation—no small triumph, incidentally—and, although I realize my methods are primitive, and involve intense concentration, they do work (sometimes). It is so comforting, at this crucial stage, to have your husband thrust one of his homey endearments your way, like, "Say, honey, did you ever send in a check for the insurance?" You are twice-blessed here. One, he called you "honey," and two—well, if he is thinking about his insurance, of course, he is only thinking about it for *you!*

Or, perhaps there is a Shakespearean passage to memorize. You hole yourself away in the kitchen so the children won't laugh at your mouthings, and your life's chosen companion will come out and sit with you. He doesn't talk, because he knows this would be disturbing. He just eats cornflakes.

There are wistful little touches, too, that make your heart stab. That is, *I* call it heart. Some people refer to it as conscience—like, "Jack's wife made a cherry pie yesterday." Pause. "Have we got any cherries?"

A husband is such a grand ego-uplifter! You can hardly wait until he comes home so you can shriek, "Guess *what!* I made *ninety* on my chemistry final!" And he says in his kindly home-touch way, "There—you see? You've worried all this time for nothing! It was easy, after all."

Oh, I wouldn't trade my way of life. I am truly sorry for women who don't have to back out their husbands' cars before rushing to meet an eight o'clock class, or who are never greeted at dawn's early light with "Oh-oh—you forgot to let the dog out last night, didn't you?" And I would hate to give up the familiar preface, "I hate to bother you but—" which, translated, means "I can't find what I was looking for in the attic. Would you go up and get it, and incidentally, while you're up there, bring down my soldering iron, too?" I don't even mind grinning agreeably when I am asked if I enjoy such and such a course as much as ever, although I finished it two years ago. NO SIR! My husband is *one* homey touch without which I wouldn't care to do!

# GAME POINT

Margaret White

A distinct "whop" sounded as my racket met the tennis ball, and sent it spiraling over the net to begin another rally. Every volley made the day seem more real. Twelve whole years had gone by since I first started thinking about playing in the National Invitational Tournament, and now I had won my way to the finals! I remember so well Daddy's word as he handed me my first racket: "You may do what you want with this; with it could go the opportunity to travel far, to play at Forest Hills or Wimbledon!" It saddens me now to think of the words that then penetrated no farther than the fringes of my mind. Daddy had once been one of the greatest of tennis players, though no one ever heard about it from HIM! We discovered his fame by looking at the carefully kept scrapbooks Mother had hidden in a closet. I looked at them over and over, each time realizing how important tennis was to him, and wanting more and more to play as he did. And now Daddy had given me a chance to try the game that had been so much a part of his early years.

I held the racket tightly in my hand as I ran from the house to begin my "career" in tennis, and started by hitting the ball against the garage. Often I ventured to the courts and would stay for hours every day. Some mornings Daddy would take me just as the sun was coming up, and we would play until he had to go to work. The next summer I played with the children in the neighborhood, then in the public park tournaments. Now here I was at the National Invitational!

Tennis came naturally to me, and I could win against most of the other beginners, but I soon learned that hard work was as important as natural ability. I played, and failed, and worked harder and harder on eliminating my weaknesses. Tennis became not a relaxing pastime, but my way of life! With the determination to excel, I devoted all my attention to perfecting the game.

Well, I had worked my way up through the ranks of the other regularly playing amateurs, and proved I could match them, but never had the test been as great as this one. Across the net was Christy Johns—who was ranked number two in the country, and seeded number one in the tournament. She had

reached the finals because of her precise skill, while my strength was in my physical endurance. Almost inevitably players with these two distinctive qualities meet in the final rounds.

Christy was a large girl with power to drive her ball accurately at a forceful speed anywhere on the court. She had man-like force, but along with it she had the man-like inability to move swiftly and gracefully. She had played the circuit since she was of minimum age, and had won continually. This caused her to be very confident that few could match her skill and still fewer could excel it. Her expression as I walked on the court told me that she knew she would soon have another win to her credit. My size and look of strength in no way matched hers, and the newly-acquired white cast on my arm dwarfed my appearance even more. It had been only two days since I broke my arm, and I hadn't remastered the control of it. When Mr. Senior, the tennis coach, saw it the day before the finals, he'd insisted I withdraw from the tournament, but my argument that I just couldn't give up without at least trying, convinced him he ought to let me at least try. I told him the Invitational might not be the biggest tournament, but would be as close as I would be to it for a long time, and that "default" was *not* in my vocabulary!

The usual Sunday afternoon crowds lined the court, four or five deep. Some came out of a genuine interest in tennis, while others came to display the latest in sports clothes, and to mingle with the "society" crowd; nevertheless, unlike the games played throughout the week strictly for "win" or "lose," this one was for an audience, and Christy and I were the star performers. Christy didn't seem to mind the watchful eyes of the spectators, but I never stopped thinking about them.

Articles in the newspaper all week about Christy, who was used to seeing her name in the headlines, gave her the lead. All the writers expected her to win the tournament, and repeatedly made their predictions. Only a few articles had been written about my matches, and those were not nearly as encouraging as the ones about Christy. One headline called me "The Energetic Midget." It must have been this one that prompted Don Crady from the Dunlop Tennis Company to come to Evanston to see me play. He, like other representatives of his company, often scouted amateur tournaments to find young players to sponsor. I looked for him in the crowd before I went on the court, but didn't see him until I laid my extra racket down at courtside. Then I caught a glimpse of him, sitting by the judges' stand. Looking again at him, then at Daddy, I realized even more that there were many people depending on me.

The game started, and with each minute the pressure increased as I ran after each shot to try to outmaneuver Christy's next thrust. I tried to rid myself of all self-consciousness, but the synchronized movement of the spectators' heads would never let me forget their watchful eyes. Still, I concentrated carefully on my backhand, forehand, placement, service, and, most of all, on the weight of my arm. At first, the cast was not much more than a nuisance, but soon the scorching sun became even more intense. Not only my back and forehead were moist, but my arm stuck tightly to the plaster-of-paris cast sur-

rounding it, and I had even more trouble moving and balancing the extra weight.

We played on and on. Her set, 12-10; then mine 8-6. Now the play became more competitive than ever. "I can't give up. I CAN'T give up!" I heard this roaring in my head as though it were chanting in time with the shifting heads. Christy's game was getting slower, but her precision never once lessened. The endurance which had trademarked me as the "Mighty Midget" faltered increasingly under my hindrances of heat and the extra weight, but I dug my smooth-soled shoes into the clay with every movement, determining to retain a stance for force, even if I couldn't use my best source of power. I could hear above all other voices on the sidelines Daddy steadily encouraging me with "That's IT baby, slam it hard! but KEEP MOVING!" I wanted to scream, "I CAN'T move, Daddy. My legs ache when I stand still!"

Six-six in the set, and my advantage in this game. With game point and one more game to go for the title, I strained my arm back to give the ball all I had. Before it spun from the racket, I heard a sound like wood being split. I don't remember falling, only that I gasped when I swallowed the dust as I hit the ground. The sun no longer blinded my eyes; the crowd no longer cheered and applauded. The only cries I dimly heard were those of horror. For a moment I opened my eyes and saw the blur of people standing over me. Daddy's was the one distinguishable face, but it was not as I had ever seen it before. Tears flowed down his cheeks. I looked at my left arm, not even realizing it was a part of me. It resembled sticks, twisted in a pile. Then, again, all was dark. The only sound that penetrated my far-way feeling screeched wildly in my ears. A siren! An ambulance siren! The moisture that had increased my feeling of heat, now made me shiver coldly. I seemed to sense that we were riding a great distance, going all the time with the loud screeching noise, and that then we came to an abrupt stop. They rolled me out of the ambulance up to a tall, brick building. It was a hospital. Then I came to, a little, and felt the violent pulsation in my left arm. I looked at it again, this time cautiously, hoping not to see the same thing. White gauze, stained with red, sheathed it from my shoulder to the ends of my fingers. What had happened? Suddenly, I remembered going back for the last shot, and the loud crack. I had broken my TENNIS arm!

Two men carefully lifted me into a high bed which was the only one in a cold, steel-grey room. At the end of the bed stood Daddy with three men. They talked in hushed voices while the nurse busily attended me. She stuck a thermometer in my mouth, then worked to get the dirty tennis dress off over my two heavily wrapped arms. The men continued to talk quietly. No words could I hear except for one that reached me—"amputation." Was it MY arm they were talking about? When I saw Daddy's face, I knew . . . but they couldn't take my tennis arm away—and Forest Hills and Wimbledon!

The nurse at last got my dress off, then thrust a needle in my vein, and soon I was asleep. I awoke periodically, and each time I saw her standing in the same place. Once, I tried to move, but she gently held me in place. She continued to give me shots to ease the pain.

It must have been early the next morning when the drugs lost their effect, and I could again think rationally. I opened my eyes and met those of the doctor who had been there when I came in. He could not hide his sadness. He lowered himself to bedside level and began explaining exactly what had happened. Both of the bones were severed at the elbow and split longitudinally. Perhaps they could never be set properly to mend at the many divisions. He then shifted his eyes away from mine and said, "The only solution seems to be to take the arm off at the shoulder." I lurched at him, and screamed in terror. His silence shrieked more loudly than any noise I had ever heard. He again looked at me, then got up saying, "But we'll try; we've got to *try!*"

The day seemed to last forever. Between my waking and sleeping, more and more men came in to examine my arm. I closed my ears to what they said, although my mind still dwelt on the arm I might lose, the dream of being the woman champion of the world, and, most of all, on Daddy's disappointment! My head throbbed from confusion almost as much as from my arm. I felt so alone—so deserted. The people around me gave me no reassurance in the midst of pain and helplessness. Then, Daddy silently entered the room. His eyes were swollen from lack of sleep, and his cheeks were drawn from worry. Poor Daddy—I had done this to him. I had caused him worry, and had shattered his dreams for my future. He couldn't say a word. He just stared, first at my face, then at the limp arm on the sheet. I knew nothing that I said could ease the great anxiety he felt for me. He tried so hard to be at ease, to convince me I wouldn't lose my arm, when all the time I was trying to do the same for him. Underneath, we both really understood without words, and so fell silent.

Our silence was broken by the doctor coming into the room. Daddy and I looked anxiously at him, waiting for a word, an answer. But he only walked across the room to the bed. As he came closer, still not saying a word, we saw that he had a tennis racket in his hand. He grinned, and placed it on the bed beside my arm.

# The Dust of Mexico

Linda Goodman

*"When the dust of Mexico falls on your heart you will never rest content until you have returned."*

The dust fell on my heart during caravan days, four years ago, when I spent three weeks traveling with eleven other young people of the Concord Presbytery, through the cities and villages visited by Presbyterian Mexico mission stations. Wanderlust had first impelled me, or rather gently shoved me away from the familiar, to go to Mexico and stay at the Morelia Mission station as a summer worker. There I lived with a missionary family, and worked, played, danced, and talked with the nurses of the nurses' home at the Sanatorio La Luz. There I also tutored Mexican interns in English, and taught English to children, grades one through six, at the Instituto Juárez, a private school in Morelia. One extra duty I had caused me more joy and more frustration, perhaps, than any other—that of pianist for the nurses' daily morning chapel service, and the weekly church service, in Morelia. Not the least of my worries were the times I couldn't understand the long Spanish words for numbers. Someone always had to find the hymn for me, or hold up fingers to signify the numbers. Mexicans have marvelous rhythm, and find a genuine joy in singing, but their mood is not prayerful, merely slow; the rhythm is not followed as it is written in the hymnal, but as it has been passed down through generations of unwritten hymns. The hymn itself is sung with exuberance, but with little recognizable tune or tone. My days were filled with activities, talk, and good-hearted laughter, all made meaningful because centered in people who are very dear to me—the Mexicans, who love with such fervor and live with such laziness that you wonder how both can be present but neither dominant.

I liked to walk downtown by myself sometimes, to get the feel of the city. On Saturdays, Delia, a young Mexican girl doing the evangelistic work in the hospital, went with me, because we liked to talk—in a curious combination of mostly Spanish, some English, and many hand motions—and simply to be with each other. We were a rather unusual sight together, I suppose—a brown-eyed, blonde American

dressed in summer seersucker and sneakers, laughing with a brown-eyed, dark-haired, olive-skinned, rather beautiful Mexican dressed in somebody's cast off sweater, cotton skirt, and flats. Boys whistled or walked close enough to brush our arms, or else they called out in the only English words they knew: "Good Morning!" (no matter what the time of day) or "I love you very much!" or "Hello beautiful!" They did this not because they knew us or because we were extraordinary, but because they were boys, Mexican boys, who had been taught that girls are to look at, completely, and then to ignore. Some were rough, some persistent, and though I could wander by myself in the daytime, I would never go out at night without a companion.

We saw many people on the streets—country people, beggar children, office girls, university students—some walking with a purpose, some having no place to go and nothing to do. We passed a native woman bent over painfully with a load of wood strapped to her back. Perhaps she was forty and only looked seventy, but her coffee-brown face was wrinkled and dirty, her gray streaked hair fixed in straight braids down her back. She wore broken leather sandals caked with the mud of her home and the street. She had draped the traditional blue-black *reboso* over her head and shoulders, rarely leaving her head uncovered. She walked slowly and heavily, bearing the mark of many years of heavy labor and disappointment. Yet her eyes were bright in their darkness, and she had a smile for an American who could manage to say "Buenos Días," with a Southern accent.

As we neared the market, we began to notice men standing around, especially those who had come to sell their live chickens, large bananas, or brightly decorated baskets. These men all led an easy-going life, leaving the worries and most of the work to their unfortunate women. Each had his own serviceable *serape,* worn open around his shoulders or folded over one of them, or maybe his own poncho-like raincoat made out of corn shucks. Each had his sturdy farmer's hat, made of thin straw, with a wide brim, and black band under the chin; each had his leather-thonged sandals and his wide leather belt. And each brought with him the smell of his farm, and the habits of the preceding generation—to lounge, to shift, and to talk or sleep against the wall.

There were children on the street, even during school hours. Nobody made them go to school—and who would want to, when they could play in the streets, spin tops, and buy *dulces* (sweets) and *helados* (ice cream) instead? So the barefoot boys in ragged trousers and grimy T-shirts played with their *boletas* (tops). And the skinny little girls skipped along, eating fresh pineapple. They were dressed in dingy, skimpy dresses, and sometimes had bright ribbons in their long braids. Many times they wore *rebosos* too—miniatures of their mothers, and destined for the same unfortunate future.

These men, women, and children were country people who had to work hard and lived in thatched-roofed, mud huts with no electricity, no water, and no food to spare. Above everything, they liked to dance and sing, but needed to save their excitement for special fiestas, when two months' burden would be lifted in the firecrackers, loud songs, and *tequila.* Knowing this makes the Mexican people easier to understand—and hard to forget.

I saw many clean-faced boys in fresh shirts, standing around in front of Morelia University, each carrying a composition notebook and one textbook—the insignia of a student. I saw working girls, walking more briskly, arm in arm, wearing American styles carried to the extreme: skirts above the knees—whether tight or held out by stiffly starched crinolines—tight sweaters, or thin blouses, and elaborate bouffant hairdos. And of course such girls would consider themselves undressed without colored eye shadow and accents of black mascara! The students and working girls are educated to a certain extent. Their concerns are ambitious, their diversions sophisticated. But they can never escape the aged social customs which have been instilled in them by their less educated, but

very conscientious parents. These customs guide even their urban life. All of these people are Mexico—the flavor of which is a peculiar blend of the old and the new.

I discovered an unusual shop while wandering through the streets and down the alleys with Delia. It was a curio shop filled with delicate silver jewelry, exquisitely carved chess sets, and handsomely woven baskets, and furniture. This shop opened onto the street, but there were no glaring signs or posters over the door—not even a name. The old proprietor was his own advertisement. Not a single object was priced. He named his price; I mine. He conceded (but not too far); I agreed to pay a mite more. We finally reached an agreeable compromise and the opal bracelet was mine. I hadn't been cheated, and neither had he.

Delia and I didn't leave the business part of the city until late afternoon, just when families were gathering to eat. All along the way, I saw the tables, complete with silverware and glasses, being set in the street or on the sidewalk. A boy, wearing on his head a tremendous, sombrero-type basket filled with the hard bread of the Mexicans, rode by on his bicycle. And in some places, in the park or the market or an alley, families were sitting on the ground in front of small tin-can fires, cooking beans to eat with their tortillas, and saving their precious meat for another day. The city was not closing for the night—merely resting—before the young girls began to promenade around the park, with proper chaperones, of course. Later the boys would follow the girls, and maybe stop to talk to them, while the older people gathered in small groups to gossip.

Always when I walked I could look up and around me and see the not too distant hills and the cloud-strewn sky. The hills are bare except for a few scattered trees, grey rocks, and low, dark green bushes. Invariably, on the other side would be a fertile valley filled with corn and small rocks, farmed by a speck of a man in the distance, who walked behind his oxen, straining to guide a cumbersome plow. Somehow the sky appeared lower in Mexico than in the United States—so low that it seemed I could pull a cloud down to sit on if I cared to! I remember looking toward the nearest mountain every afternoon, to see if the weather would change. Sometimes I could see the rain come in dark, heavy sheets; sometimes only the clouds and wind revolved in turbulent dryness. But there was always a gray interlude between the bright sunlight and starry darkness, never a gradual sunset.

All of the Mexicans I happened to know were patient with my broken Spanish and unfamiliarity with their customs. Always they helped me as I struggled for a word; as I attempted to bargain in the market; as I learned the order of worship in church, where they informed me in low whispers when to stand up or sit down. These kindnesses were my salvation all summer, and we learned to communicate many times because of my blunders.

But I came to realize that children have no such consideration for language, or foreigners. When they babbled a question in Spanish, they expected me to answer it! They explained a game to me and wanted me to play it immediately. In self defense, I taught them "London Bridge" in English, and we had great fun! There was an old custom at the Instituto Juárez that required the children to stand, out of respect and reverence, every time a teacher entered or left the room. To the missionary English teacher before me they had said very slowly and precisely in English, "Good morning, Mr. Grier!" So, the first time I entered the classroom, and every time from then on, they rose together and chanted carefully and shrilly, "Good morning, Mr. Goodman!" I tried to explain the difference between "Mister" and "Miss," but they only changed to "Mrs." So I gave up, and simply loved them for trying, anyway. These children looked the same as those on the streets, except perhaps slightly cleaner. They weren't any better disciplined, and didn't learn much more than how to march together, and cheat without being caught. Unless they absorbed more of the lessons than was obvious, they came to school to have fun,

with the special treat of having an American girl trying to teach them English in Spanish.

Once, I went to listen to the Niños Cantores, the boys' choir of Morelia, practise for three hours after school. They sat on benches in a damp concrete conservatory which held only a piano and the broken-down chair on which I was sitting. The director was a fine-tempered young artist with penetrating eyes, a keen ear, and flamboyant anger. The young boys, all alto and soprano, squirmed and fidgeted under the concentrated discipline and practice, but when the maestro struck the cue note they sang Mozart's *Requiem* with the clearest, most beautifully sustained tone I have ever heard. I remembered these slightly dirty, shaggy-haired boys the next day when I went to High Mass in the Cathedral, and saw the choir boys dressed in their black robes, white overgarments, and red bows, playing in the cobblestone courtyard before the service. When I heard them sing the entire Mass, accompanied by one of the largest organs in the country, and surrounded by the shining gold and stone tracery of the heavily ornamented cathedral, I realized that a vital part of these boys had been touched by the fierce, passionate, Mexican love of music. Now they can travel over the United States and Europe, meet people of different races and cultures, with music as a common interest and touchstone for future education.

Yes, I walked through the streets, I talked to the people, understanding some, and always listening with care and interest. I learned not to eat ice cream off the street unless a school child offered it to me and I couldn't refuse. I learned that one may tire easily in high altitudes, and not know it until really sick from exhaustion. I learned to seek comfort in the quietness of natural things. The hills and clouds and people of Mexico are a part of me now. Perhaps I must return. Into many fountains and pools, foreigners flip the coins that will insure their return. But the dust of Mexico outweighs them all.

# A BRIDGE

Helen L. Pearre

Virginia and I went happily along with her family to the evening service, looking forward to a visit with them afterwards, as Mother had said I might stay over there until eight-thirty. Her father was the minister at the neighborhood church several blocks away, a tall man and lean, with soft white hair, as I remember—and rather pious looking. I was impressed mostly by his mealtime devotional, and his putting away the Sunday newspaper until Monday, which to me was unbelievably strict; for what could be more harmless than looking at the funnies in bed on Sunday morning?

Her mother, I just don't remember. Could it be that she wore inconspicuous dark clothes, or that Virginia and I played out of doors and seldom went inside the house,—or was my attention so strongly drawn to her attractive big sisters that I took no notice of Mrs. Anderson? These young ladies were going through the "flapper" stage of the era we now call "The Roaring Twenties."

Virginia, older than I was, and much taller, seemed to take a motherly interest in me, and I certainly looked up to her. Her dark wavy hair cut in a Dutch Bob, and her brown freckles, emphasized the gentleness and kindness visible in the relaxed smile that made pleasant squint lines about her eyes. She was the youngest child in her family, and I the oldest in mine. Perhaps we were drawn closer together because I was reaching up and out for companionship, while she felt a little reluctant to leave childhood. Since my family moved to another town during my ninth year, I must have been around eight years old, and Virginia was probably at the gawky age of eleven.

Riding home with the preacher's family at the close of the meeting, I was surprised to see that daylight had disappeared, and lights were burning in all the houses. When we got back to their place, the family gathered in the dining room, and two of the girls lifted and folded the white cloth which covered a table still holding a variety of food left from the noon meal. There was baked chicken to put in a cold biscuit and eat with your hand; there were pickles and relishes, and ragged slices of cake with sticky icing lay on the nearly empty cake stand. Mr. Anderson's scripture and grace lasted unusually long, but finally we partook of the cold nourishment.

Supper over, Virginia and I went upstairs, pausing for a few minutes on the landing, where a velvet-cushioned window seat invited one to rest during the day, and look out of the windows. Now, however, we sat with our backs to the chilling night, chatting away and feeling the coziness of close walls and carpeted stairway.

A visit to the older girls' room was the big event of the evening. A myriad of things caught my eye and interest. The old-fashioned dressing table had numerous shallow drawers, and seemed overflowing with hairpins, ribbons, and trinkets of all kinds. Their world looked exciting, and glamorous, and so full of flurry!

It seemed we had just got there when I was reminded of the time. The girls called out, "Goodnight!" and Virginia walked with me down to the prism-glassed front door, and punched on the outside light switch. The dim glow that illumined the porch suddenly brought some vague feelings of dread. " 'Bye," I called out weakly as the heavy front door closed, and leaving behind me the friendly windows, cheery with warmth and light, I faced, beyond the edge of the porch, the night!—terrifyingly black and solid.

Bravely but slowly, I started down the flight of wooden steps. Shadows flitted here and there over them; they grew duskier as I descended. Reaching the cement walk at the bottom, I could see, through the trees and shrubs of the side yard, the flickering arc-light on the corner, which cast a sallow circle on the streets below, making the darkness at its edge blacker and deeper, and giving a slight swaying motion to all the forms between the light and me.

On I went. Now I came to the several steps leading down to the sidewalk, and there yawned in front of me the wide black street with sinister looking cars parked along the opposite side. I was so small! and so alone! Fear gripped me; I felt swallowed by the Unknown.

Somehow I managed to look up. Overhead stretched the vastness of black sky; the stars shone serenely in their right places. And then it came to me—the image of people just like me, young and old, standing in their pews, and holding song-books, and singing, "God will take care of *you-oo.*" I grasped at the straw! I believed it! I needed someone, and He was there! Fear left me.

Confidently, I went ahead, saying the words over and over, across the street, past the cars, and on up the sidewalk. Nearing home, I ran, filled with growing relief. I had crossed the dark street as though, in my fancy, over an arched bridge, faith struggling against anxiety on the upward curve, and the down-side easy with assurance.

Mother met me at the door, my eyes and cheeks glowing. "Hi, Mommie—had a real good time!" I said.

# THE SKETCHES

Betsy Johnson

As Paul rolled over on his side, the rusty bedsprings squeaked under him. "I'm hungry, he thought, and I bet there's not a darn thing to eat." After taking a deep breath, he got up and stumbled into the dingy kitchen. Opening the small refrigerator, he peered into the almost empty interior, and said aloud, "I knew it! Guess I'll have to go to Delma's and get something, if I can find some money."

Thirty minutes later Paul was scanning the well-stocked shelves of the neighborhood grocery, choosing not what most tempted him, but what was cheapest. Suddenly he heard a voice behind him, "Well, the little housewife is out kinda early, isn't she?"

Paul turned and grinned half-heartedly. "Jim!" he exclaimed—"you old son-of-a-gun! Yeah, I am up pretty early, but it's not easy to sleep on an empty stomach."

Jim, glancing at Paul's meager supplies, chuckled and said, "Looks like you might be a little low on funds."

"Yeah, you're right. I haven't been working for three weeks now."

Jim butted in, "Say Paul, you might be interested in this. A magazine—let's see, what's the name of it—*The Monthly Illustrated*—that's it. Anyway, they need some animal sketches and . . ."

"What kind of animals?" Paul interrupted abruptly.

"Mice, I think," Jim offered.

"Mice!—did you say *mice*? I did some great sketches of some a couple of years ago! Now if I can just find 'em."

Jim snapped his fingers, "Oh, I forgot to tell you. The deadline is tomorrow."

"That's o.k. with me," Paul answered with a grin. "I think those sketches are up at the apartment. Thanks for the tip. Come by tomorrow, and we'll have a few beers to celebrate. I just know the *Illustrated* will take them."

Jim laughed, "Good luck—I'm pulling for you! And you can bet your boots that I'll be up to help you celebrate."

After paying for the groceries, Paul left the store and hurried down the street. "I can see those sketches now," he thought. "My mice really look like

they're alive. Damn, if *they* don't sell I might as well quit! But I know that magazine will jump at the chance." He turned, and walked quickly up the steps, flinging open the door without even stopping. After bounding up three more flights, he paused with his hand on the doorknob, to catch his breath. Opening the door, he glanced automatically at the easel by the window. "Where *are* those sketches? Let's see now. When I moved in here, I took some boxes down to the basement. I bet that's where they are."

Paul ran down to the first floor, taking the steps two at a time. Stopping at the second room on the left, he knocked loudly on the door, and, after hesitating a second, pushed it open, and called Mrs. Haney several times. There was no answer. Walking over to a walnut desk, he pulled out the top drawer, and after rummaging around among letters and papers, found the key to the basement storage room.

Minutes later, Paul was groping for the light switch in the dank basement. The storage room was crammed full of crates and boxes belonging to Mr. Haney's tenants. He brushed a spider's web from his short black hair, and switched on the light. A cardboard carton fell on the floor, dumping *Life* magazines everywhere. He walked carefully into the center of the room, trying not to hit anything else.

"Where the devil is that box? It's just got to be around here somewhere! Maybe it's over there in the corner." As he was crossing the room, Paul noticed a box on the cement floor. Leaning over, he tried to read the name scrawled on the top. He wiped the dust off with his right hand and read *Paul Bryan,* written in black crayon.

"Well, you've come home to daddy, haven't you?" The words echoed in the dark corners, but Paul didn't notice. He squatted on his heels and yanked the top off. "What's all this junk? Oh, those fashion illustrations—I'd forgotten all about them. The sketches—they're probably down on the bottom." He opened a large manila folder, and there they were. He lifted them gently, and turned so that the light would fall on the yellowing papers.

"Whose are these?" he thought wildly—"they aren't mine. This looks like some fifth-grader's scribbling . . . Damn, these *are* mine! But look at 'em! These mice look like they're dead; I know mine didn't look like this—mine had *spirit* and *life!* . . . These *are* mine! I guess I just forgot how they really looked."

Paul let the papers fall to the cold floor, and, with a shrug, walked slowly toward the open door.

# The Search

I'm one
And I'm many—
An old thought
That somehow
Seems appropriate now.
I'm lost
In a mixture
Of various frames,
Questioning
Those which will fit.
The answer seems distant
As do
The rambling, puzzling me's.

—CINDY TROBAUGH

# Hidden Selves

Quickly, quickly hide your self.
There're people knocking on the door.
Settled the mask you'll wear today?
And admonished self to show no more?

"Come in, come in, how kind you are
To visit me and leave your tasks!"
One by one they enter there,
Each one of them behind a mask.

—BECKY GARRISON

# AN INTELLIGENT HEART

Becky Garrison

Mrs. Smith, of average height and definitely over-plump, refused to wear a girdle except on Sunday. Needless to say, this didn't help her present an attractive side view. Her gray hair, with its natural half-curl, was always awry in spite of a midday combing, and her eyes could be described by no other word but bleary. Thank goodness for the glasses that helped conceal them! A smile, say the poets, is a joy to behold. It brightens the day. Mrs. Smith's grin wasn't exactly a joy, but the four gold caps certainly made it bright.

Mrs. Smith assembled and bagged dry cleaning at the same cleaners that employed me as office girl. After two or three weeks I understood what Laramore, the Negro cleaner, had meant when he said, "Miz Smith sho do keep busy talkin'." Her husband, her children, her meals, her yard—anything about her life was fine material for the one-sided conversations we held. I soon learned that only an occasional nod from me was needed to keep her happily rambling on. Then I'd be free to multiply and add and figure discounts on the unending piles of tickets. I became so conditioned to the constant talk that I missed it when she paused for even a few minutes. "What are you going to have for supper?" I'd ask, trying to start her up. She always responded.

Mrs. Smith, a devout Nazarene, in recent years had given up many "worldly things," as she called them. No longer did she and Laddie go to see the Saturday night double feature at the local theater—but a more avid t.v. fan would be hard to find. Occasionally she would wear a trace of lipstick, though usually she worked unadorned. Her special project during the summer I worked with her was to help Gertrud, a fellow worker, "see the light." Gertrud had come from Germany at the end of the war as the wife of an army captain. Young, slender, cute—Gertrud worked in the front, too, in the fluff-dry department, and had a sly habit of being terribly busy, with her back to the door, when customers came in. All but the men customers, that is. While her children ran around dirty and ragged, Gertrud dressed immaculately and bought a new outfit every other week. Insurance men and men from the used car lot were always coming in to try to collect from Gertrud, but somehow she managed to sweet-talk them until Arthur's monthly pay-check came. Mrs. Smith zealously tried to bring Gertrud to an awareness of her sins.

"You know," she would say meaningfully after an especially ragged-looking child had left, "I cain't hardly stand to see kids whose parents don't take care of them!" Gertrud would agree, never dreaming Mrs. Smith meant her.

Mrs. Smith was a perfect working partner for me that summer. Although thirty years my senior she was as silly as adolescent I. One Saturday morning when Gertrud had the day off, and only Willie Mae, the skirt presser, Mrs. Smith and I were in the front, we harmonized on every song we knew, most of which were gospel hymns. When the boss would come through ranting and raving about something we'd done wrong (usually put a special in with the regular cleaning), she would giggle with me behind his back. Not very bright, Mrs. Smith did her job in the way she'd been taught long ago, even if she knew time could be saved with a new method. I'll never forget the sight of her with a long brown dry cleaning bag draped over her head before pulling it over the clothes. Her slowness infuriated the manager and amused Gertrud, but I didn't care. I didn't care if her hair did fly out around her face, or if her figure was less than perfect. Mrs. Smith had what Anna Seyton, in *The Winthrop Woman,* so aptly phrased "an intelligent heart." Her friendly interest and garrulousness made the customers feel welcome and at ease. She always went around the counter to help children when they nervously stood just inside the door wondering what to do, and afraid to ask.

In our society today, where a college diploma signifies so much, the intelligent hearts are being neglected. Mrs. Smith wouldn't be able to get into college. Dependability and cheerfulness wouldn't pull her through the entrance exams; but if they could, she would be dead socially anyway, of course. Really, how could she be "neat, sharp, and collegiate" with those homey sayings slipping out in every sentence? "Whew me, I'm full as a tick!" isn't what one says after a delicious meal in educated circles. Of course she wouldn't get into college. But Mrs. Smith has had a college diploma second hand three times. Her oldest son is now a practising M.D., while Helen and Lois, her twin girls, have graduated from a small near-by state school.

Mrs. Smith never took child development psychology. She probably didn't even attend the pre-parenthood clinic sponsored by the local health department. But her children love their parents and home (though nobody has ever accused one of them of an Oedipus complex!) They all had to work hard to put themselves through college, but not one of them has had to visit a doctor for a "nervous stomach," or a psychiatrist for neuroses. When I turned away crying after dealing with a particularly nasty customer, Mrs. Smith's warm hug restored my confidence more than any "You've got to learn to be more mature" would have. Perhaps someday our educated elite will recognize people like Mrs. Smith by conferring upon them a degree of Intelligent Heart. I can just see *my* Mrs. Smith, gold teeth and all, receiving her diploma and saying, "Well now, if that ain't fit to beat everything!"

# THE GOLDEN STREAM

Julie Green

A creek near our house flows slowly from one lake into another. It helps to keep the water levels of both from overflowing during heavy rain. Many of us have childhood memories of this little current and its jungle-like surroundings. Its popularity is still evident from the well-trodden paths which wind up and down through trees and underbrush, leading back and forth from one side of the water to the other. Only the most experienced pathfinders attempted to run its entire length without slipping into the water somewhere along the way.

The creek is still called The Golden Stream—a name we gave it long ago when giant roots protruding near the top of the banks provided good handholds, and caves dug into the clay-colored dirt offered protection from the enemy. I especially remember one that my boyfriend, Kim, and I excavated by ourselves with much difficulty. We called it our secret cave, and covered it with a lot of dead branches and leaves to keep it hidden from others. It was just large enough for both of us to sit comfortably in. Once we started a little fire just to see what the smoke would look like winding through the holes in the roots hanging over us. It sent us choking into the open air, rubbing our profusely watering eyes.

Further upstream there was a long rope-like branch that we could swing on, across what seemed like a ravine, to reach the opposite bank. Those who missed, or were off balance on the first swing, inevitably were left dangling knee-deep in the muddy ooze below. Some, accused of being sissy, calling for help that wasn't forthcoming, ended up in the hospital after their first experience with a broken bone or two.

Damming up the stream to make a bridge was especially fun. Using our bare hands and palm leaf fronds, we played for hours, trying to cut off the flow of water completely. Slowly it would rise and flow over the top, leaving nothing but the foundation strips of palms. Our ability to outmaneuver

was so brief that it angered me as the oncoming water washed away everything. I always wondered how such a heavy mass of dirt could disappear so completely without at least being deposited in some other visible place. It just turned into big, dirty, foaming bubbles.

At one point along the way, the water passed through a large tunnel, moving under a street overhead. Water was fairly deep and swift in the tunnel, but by walking stiff-legged against the sides we could reach the other opening and daylight. There in the shallow water, we easily trapped baby fish just coming out the other end, before they could become orientated. A few tried to fight their way back upstream unsuccessfully. By splashing with our hands and feet, we pushed them up on the sand, where they lay flapping and gasping. Sometimes we managed to wipe out whole migrations of these fish before they reached the safety of the lake.

Even now when I'm at home, I like to walk along the bank. It looks so drab and different with all its old cans and bits of broken bottles. Those of us who used to run barefooted here seldom noticed these before. However, they remind me of one occasion when I had to carry a boy home with a large circular gash in his toe. I remember his brother screaming when he saw how bad it was. The one who was wounded just stood there wringing his hands and moaning, and some of the other children ran home. I picked him up, anyway, after I wrapped his bloody toe up in an old dirty sock.

# Welcome New Year

On New Year's Eve at twelve
I walked outside my door
And saw the yellow moon
Not affected by Janus,
And all the stars
Surrounding this aged god
Likewise unaltered.

New intentions I then discarded
For moons and stars knew too well
That a change for me
Would never work
By papered resolution.

—CINDY TROBAUGH

# THE CENTER

Betsy Johnson

Moses Lee lifted an arm to shade his eyes as he squinted down the narrow dirt road. An old Chevy pickup ricocheted from one side to the other. It eased up the slope and stopped in front of a low, yellow, cinder-block motel. A man in his early thirties slid out of the driver's seat and shuffled toward Moses.

"How'd you do last night, Lee?" he asked in a high-pitched voice.

"Not so bad—a man from Ogden, heading for Cleveland, and a couple from Bakerfield."

Ernest shrugged, "Well, Labor Day's coming—things oughta pick up."

"Can't get much worse," was Moses's caustic reply.

"Bring you anything from town?"

"Nope. Went in late yesterday afternoon myself. Thanks anyhow."

Ernest climbed in the truck, and with a grinding of gears, backed down the slope, and drove off in a cloud of arid dust. Lee wiped the sweat from his forehead with a stained handkerchief, and walked stiffly down the hill to the park.

The park, if it could be called that, covered an area about half the size of a football field. There were no trees, and the grass, after struggling through one Kansas summer, had given up. A smelly, aged buffalo lay in a rusty wire enclosure. Two picnic tables, worn to silver gray, stood in front of a flagpole.

Moses saw none of these things as he walked toward the stone marker beside the flagpole. This was his daily ritual—almost a sacred ceremony. He knew the engraved message on the six-foot high marker by heart. At the top of the bronze plate was engraved: *U. S. Geographical Center,* and below: *This spot was found to be the exact center of the United States of America by an official team of surveyors sponsored by the Department of the Interior. June 12, 1913.*

Thrusting a long, skinny arm deep into the pocket of his pants, Moses thought of the letter he had gotten that day. "Son, why don't you give up and come home? You know that you'll never make a go of it out there in that Godforsaken place!"

Moses Lee knew that he would never "make a go of it." But he didn't know that in eight months Alaska would be admitted into the Union, changing the geographical center of the United States from Lebanon, Kansas, to an equally Godforsaken place in North Dakota.

# NUNS

Angela Williams

During a hate-boys campaign in the sixth grade, I decided I wanted to be a nun. *Anything* to get away from those bothersome creatures, who insisted on playing kiss-catch every single recess! All I knew about nuns was that they couldn't wear lipstick, prayed a lot, and most important of all, they never married! But somewhere along the line, I changed my mind about my vocation, and had not given nuns much thought, really, until last year.

The letter arrived! I was going to spend a fabulous summer working in Puerto Rico. What was this last paragraph about? Working with five Episcopal NUNS? I couldn't believe it! To begin with, I had thought only the Roman Catholic Church produced these pious women. Also, I had never done more than peer at nuns walking in twos down the narrow sidewalks of Charleston. How could I possibly live with five angelic-faced penguins for a whole summer!

I saw Sister Esther first. She was playing shortstop with about twenty little boys, habit pulled to her bent knees, revealing thick, black, patched stockings and mannish black shoes, dulled by a thin coat of yellow-green dust. She looked like an Indian—her face and hands deeply tanned. With that stiff white cloth folded around her head, she appeared neckless. Sprinting for a grounder, she yelled directions to the batter, first *and* second basemen. She certainly had things under control, and I later learned that this leadership ability of hers covered activities other than ballgames.

As head of the small convent, Sister Esther ruled with an iron hand, and delicate, meek Sister Marjory appeared completely submissive until the day we caught her walking a mile to the market, against Sister Esther's "request." Not only that, but she had saved the *publico* fare to buy herself a chocolate ice cream cone! Sister Esther reprimanded her harshly, and from then on we girls sneaked cones to Sister Marjory every day. She never refused them. It was Sister Marjory who jumped up during offices to get the cat off the altar; it was Sister Marjory who giggled during the blessing; and it was she

who rolled up her sleeves to get a tan at our beach picnic, only to be treated for second-degree burns later on. We constantly teased Sister Marjory just to watch her face turn pink. But we never crossed Sister Esther's path if we could help it. There was a sternness about her that put us on our guard. We all marvelled at the way she rattled off Spanish, too. Sister Marjory, after almost six years in Puerto Rico, still said, "A-di-os!"

Two of the five sisters rarely ventured from the convent grounds—a Canadian and a Spaniard. They were both round-faced, red-cheeked, and sweet-eyed; and both wore plain glasses, of course. They always volunteered to read during the noon meal, and it's a wonder they didn't have neck trouble the way they bobbed their heads down and up at holy names. (And, believe me, there were a lot of those!)

Then there was Sister Althea, who ran the school. A silken-faced Negro with well-proportioned features—"lovely" was the only word for her. She never raised her voice, as Sister Esther often did, yet when she spoke everyone listened. The other Sisters knew that her intelligence surpassed theirs; and this in itself was completely new to me, a deep-Southerner.

In fact, the whole summer was a revelation to me! I found out, for instance, that these dead-pan, wrapped-up women of the church, who had formerly appeared to me so good that I had feared them, could not only be human, but fascinatingly individual—dynamic, witty, hard-working, talented, intelligent, *and* bossy. It seemed to me that this small group of nuns realized that prayer plus action was necessary to carry out their purpose on the island. For example, every Wednesday would find Sister Esther bounding over to the jail with ball and net under her arm, ready to set up a volleyball game. Sometimes she took a guitar and song books. Then there was the day she appealed to Governor Marín to do something about the jailing of ten-year-old kids. (The following month a new Chief-of-Police was appointed.) We could find Sister Marjory hieing up the crowded hillside, just any time, to give out clothes. Six days a week the Sisters served children hot meals, and games were kept out for them to use whenever they came to the house. The doors were never locked. On a hot afternoon, a green station wagon could be seen winding its way up to the river with a load of excited boys wearing scraps of bathing suits that the Sisters had made for them.

Yes, I've not only changed my mind about my vocation, but about nuns. Now, when I see one, I don't feel embarrassed, or hurry on with averted eyes. I smile, because I see the expression on Sister Esther's face when five-year-old Pedro took refuge under her habit during a hide-and-seek game!

# THE CANYON

Vickie Fernandez

Crowds of curious people had leaned on that sturdy, black iron railing. They'd chipped and worn away the paint, exposing the bare, bronze metal beneath. They'd leaned there in the quiet, cool hours of earliest morning, and leaned there in the oppressive heat of day, with the sun beating down on them; and some had come back, as she had, to see the canyon in that space of time when the day gives way to night, and in its passage challenges the coming blackness with an array of reds.

The girl rested her chin on her folded, sunburned arms as she leaned against the railing. Propped on one leg, the other crossed, she stood there gazing toward the horizon.

"I see myself on an island," she thought, "and there's a river rushing all around me. The home I've just left is on the meadow bank. But the one I'm going to is on the cliff side, which looks very dangerous and hard to climb." This wasn't the first time she had moved from one house to another. Service people spent their whole lives roaming from town to town, country to country. Yet, for her, it still seemed a frightful, difficult thing to do.

Awareness of the panorama below slowly absorbed her thoughts as sun-dried wood soaks up a summer rain. Nearly as far as the eye could see, the Grand Canyon surrounded her in a great crescent. Its grotesque walls were flaming in the glow of the setting sun. The light fell across the craggy, rutted face, until the western bank left the gorges below steeped in deep purple shadows. Trees formed a black lace silhouette along the western rim as their leafy limbs stretched toward the plain blue sky. The red ball of flame dropped, with seeming reluctance, into the days of other lands, steeling the canyon colors. Brilliant fuschias flickered along the walls, slowly quieting to embers of auburn. The purples were swallowed up by the black from below.

The stillness, the security of night had engulfed the canyon. Its power swept over her. Was it the power of night? Or was it the power of courage in the blackness—a bridge of strength across the river of her mind, a belief that something far greater than she reflects such grandeur, insures that tomorrow will come . . . and cares for the lonely traveler.

# Emily Dickinson's Emphasis on the Unseen

Kay Davis

Emily Dickinson believed in the Amherst God and heaven, even though she grew into the habit of staying home from the Amherst Church. After the wagons of "dimity ladies" and spruced children and men had all passed by on Sunday mornings, she used to come out in her garden where she would sit alone with her hens and her dog, Carlo. The sound of hymnal words might have carried down the quiet street. Perhaps she hummed along with the words to "A mighty fortress is our God—a bulwark never failing—" . . . In one poem Emily wrote:

> Some keep the Sabbath going to church;
> I keep it staying at home,
> With a bobolink for a chorister,
> And an orchard for a dome.
>
> Some keep the Sabbath in surplice;
> I just wear my wings,
> And instead of tolling the bell for church,
> Our little sexton sings.
>
> God preaches,—a noted clergyman,—
> And the sermon is never long;
> So instead of getting to heaven at last,
> I'm going all along![1]

She was no Sunday thespian; on the other hand she was no atheist. Most important, she was not a person to doubt God simply for the reason that He has yet to be *seen,* or proved as in a test tube. Emily Dickinson believed in a great many things which are unseeable. The physical aspect of a thing was of little consequence to her compared to the spiritual. In a note to a friend, she said: "A Letter always feels to me like immortality because it is the mind alone without corporeal friend."[2]

Hers was a form of spiritual telepathy with people and with God. To Jane Humphrey she wrote:

> I have written you a great many letters since you left me—not the kind of letters that go in post-offices and ride in mail-bags—but queer—little silent ones—very full of affection—and full of confidence— . . . *not* paper and ink letters . . .[3]

In one poem she spoke of her unseen soul, whose furniture and house she could not see, but knew nonetheless were there;[4] in one, of a visit from the wind, that no one's ever seen, yet everyone knows exists.[5] Hope she could picture in her mind as "the thing with feathers"—which "sweetest in the gale is heard."[6] She was as certain of an invisible God and a place in some invisible eternity "as if the chart were given."[7]

In a letter to her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Bowles, she said in a burst of exuberance, "Tonight looks like 'Jerusalem'."[8] She had a

soul that wide and that articulate. She went on to add in the next lines:

> I think Jerusalem must be like Sue's Drawing Room, when we are talking and laughing there, and you and Mrs Bowles are by. I hope we may all behave so as to reach Jerusalem.[9]

Feel the sense impressions of the word Jerusalem, so startlingly and wonderfully out of all context! Yet her ideas and her impressionistic style (with all its dashes and capitalized letters) would never have been understood during her own lifetime. There were two alternatives for Emily Dickinson. "Adjust": Believe everything at its face value, or experiment with thoughts and metaphors, in Amherst oblivion, to the heart's content. Hers was a lifework which insisted on being accomplished. She was full of questioning and doubts about certain avenues of the Bible and of the Christian faith. Sometimes it does seem that she dangered close to blasphemy. Imagine the consternation this verse would have produced in Amherst circles—in almost any circle—at that time:

> Should you but fail at Sea—
> In sight of me—
> Or doomed lie—
> Next Sun—to die—
> Or rap—at Paradise—unheard
> I'd *harass God*
> Until he let you in![10]

Although she couldn't dream of publicity in her lifetime, she worked silently and "flurriedly." Some think she wrote as many as 1775 poems.[11] John Ciardi and others have said that even her sister Lavinia, who lived in the same house with her, "never guessed the dedication and the gradual self-awareness and self-certainty with which Emily shaped herself for immortality."[12]

She could not possibly have wanted, for one minute, that her soul's outpourings should be destroyed as she dictated in her will. If Emily Dickinson's emphasis was on the unseeable, incorporeal things of life, it seems an intended emphasis, for the benefit of a realizable God and an eventual Reader, spelled with one of her capital R's.

## FOOTNOTES

[1] Louis Untermeyer, ed., *Modern American and Modern British Poetry* (New York, 1955), p. 14.
[2] Thomas H. Johnson, *Letters of Emily Dickinson,* Vol. II (Cambridge, 1958), p. 327.
[3] Johnson, Vol. I, p. 81.
[4] Johnson, Vol. II, p. 501.
[5] Dickinson, "The Wind Tapped Like a Tired Man," Untermeyer, p. 15.
[6] Emily Dickinson, "Hope Is the Thing with Feathers," Untermeyer, p. 15.
[7] Dickinson, "I Never Saw a Moor," Untermeyer, p. 3.
[8] Johnson, *Letters of Emily Dickinson,* Vol. II, p. 334.
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] *Ibid.,* p. 393.
[11] John Ciardi, "Out of the Top Drawer," *Nation,* Vol. 181 (Nov. 5, 1955), 397-398.
[12] *Ibid.*

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